



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

1930 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
PH: 406.4HEALTH or 406.443.2584
Fax: 406.457.8990

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Contact: Karen Dobson, Public Health Nurse Supervisor, 406-457-8945

Gayle Shirley, Communications Coordinator, 406-457-8908

Season's First Cases of Influenza Confirmed in County

The season's first two cases of flu in Lewis and Clark County have been identified, the health department said Thursday, bringing to 15 the number of confirmed cases statewide.

The local cases of influenza A were diagnosed in two adult men, one of whom is known not have been vaccinated.

So far this season, flu activity in Montana is "sporadic," according to the state health department. In addition to the local cases, 13 other cases of influenza A and B have been reported – in Flathead, Missoula, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, and Yellowstone counties. Influenza A and B are different types of flu virus; both cause seasonal epidemics of disease almost every winter in the United States.

About 5-20 percent of U.S. residents get the flu each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Flu season typically peaks in January or February. Although flu activity nationwide is low so far, the CDC predicts an increase in the next few weeks.

During the 2012-2013 season, the first case of flu in the county was reported in October 2012. Statewide, there were 361 hospitalizations and 15 deaths related to flu, the state health department reported.

Flu, or influenza, is highly contagious and can cause severe disease in high-risk populations like young children, the elderly, and people with chronic health conditions such as heart and lung disease and diabetes. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Flu may also worsen underlying chronic medical conditions.

People with flu can spread it to others up to three feet away. Most experts believe flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets expelled when people cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can contaminate surfaces and be spread by touching those surfaces or by directly inhaling the droplets.

"CDC recommends an annual flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older to protect against the flu, but it takes two weeks for the vaccine to become effective," said Karen Dobson, public health nurse at the health department. "Now that we know there's flu in our community, we want to remind people of actions they can take along with getting vaccinated to reduce their chances of getting it."

Vaccination is the best way to prevent flu. Other precautions include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water.

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.

- Avoiding close contact with sick people.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

If you do get sick, stay home and limit your contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

The health department offers flu shots and other immunizations on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1930 Ninth Avenue. No appointment is needed.

For more information, call the health department's flu hotline at 457-8904 or visit www.lewisandclarkhealth.org.

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